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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, EUR/RPM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [GR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: RESPONSE TO NOBLE ARCHER LIMITED TO
POLITICAL/DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS

REF: ANKARA 2126

Classified By: Pol-Mil Counselor A.F. Godfrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) MFA Deputy Director General for Maritime and Aviation Affairs Basat Ozturk told Pol-Mil Couns on December 22 that Turkey's response to Noble Archer is complete; it was limited to three letters: From Turkey's NATO PermRep to the NATO SecGen, from Turkey's Military Representative at SHAPE to SACEUR, and from the Turkish Military Committee representative to the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. According to Ozturk, these letters have already been delivered and they state that NATO's participation in the Noble Archer exercise is unacceptable to Turkey; the exercise taking place does not change the facts on the ground and will not prejudice Turkey's legal position regarding disputes in the Aegean in general and Agios Efstratios' demilitarized status in particular. The letters also note that a repeat occurrence will be "intolerable." Elaborating on the last point, Ozturk said he would interpret this statement to mean that Turkey would not restrict its response to words if there are indications of NATO participation in any future exercise scenario involving disputed islands. When pressed to explain what that meant, Ozturk quickly stated that he did not mean that Turkey would use military force to prevent NATO's participation in exercises with scenarios unacceptable to Turkey, but that "there are ways within NATO to prevent such exercises from taking place." Ozturk also made clear that Turkey supported NATO carrying out exercises in the Aegean in principle, but opposed the inclusion of islands whose demilitarized status is under dispute.

Deep Disappointment, Especially with NATO SecGen

¶2. (C) Ozturk said that the Turkish government and military had, up until the last minute on December 15, hoped that its request would be taken into consideration by NATO's military and political authority and that the exercise would be canceled. He stressed that the entire Turkish government, including the military, is disappointed and "deeply frustrated" by what they perceive to be a failure on the part of NATO, particular in the person of SecGen de Hoop Scheffer, to take Turkey's objections seriously. According to Ozturk, SecGen de Hoop Scheffer has lost all credibility within the Turkish government. He noted that the letter from the Turkish PermRep to the NATO SecGen contained strong language stating that the responsibility for the implementation of the

exercise "falls on the shoulder of the Secretary General." Ozturk reiterated Turkey's position that the Luns Doctrine should have been respected and that NATO should not take sides in a bilateral dispute among Allies.

December 18 Incident Unrelated

¶3. (C) Despite the deep sense of frustration, Ozturk emphasized that Turkey will not link the Noble Archer dossier to any other issues and will not manifest its displeasure via other channels, including in its bilateral relationship with Greece. Although Ozturk said he did not have specific details about exactly what occurred in the skies over the Aegean on December 18, he rejected Greek media claims that Turkish military aircraft's activities in the Aegean represented Turkey's reaction to Noble Archer. According to Ozturk, the first sortie of Turkish F-16 aircraft over the Aegean on December 18 were an unarmed flight on a routine mission. Once these aircraft had been intercepted by armed Greek fighters, Turkey launched a second, armed, flight of F-16 aircraft to engage. Ozturk said the Greek embassy has requested a meeting with him on Wednesday, December 24, to discuss the incident. He has requested further information from Turkish military authorities and pledged to provide more details to us when it becomes available to him (Note: We are also seeking information regarding the December 18 incident from CAOC 6. End Note.).

Still Pursuing Bilateral Rapprochement with Greece

¶4. (C) Ozturk noted that the Turks are seeking to hold the next round of bilateral political director-level discussions with Greece in January and will take a constructive approach in advancing the work of rapprochement. He noted that one goal for Turkey is to establish direct contact between air force commanders, a step Ozturk claims the Greeks have assiduously avoided. He also said the GOT has proposed a "code of conduct" for military flights in the Aegean, including a proposal for all military aircraft to be unarmed. Ozturk claimed that the Greek military has resisted this proposal; "if the Greeks are willing to agree to it, the 'code of conduct' could be signed tomorrow, as far as the Turkish government and military is concerned."

¶5. (C) Comment: We are still seeking to establish ground truth concerning the alleged overflight of the Greek island of Farmakonisi by armed Turkish fighters on December 18, but the MFA has denied any linkage to Noble Archer. The GOT is clearly furious over NATO participation in Noble Archer, but it also seeks to underscore that it wants to take the high road in its response and will limit it to the letters it issued to NATO officials; it will not/not take further steps against NATO, Greece or the US. End Comment.

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Jeffrey